

Congressman Ron Paul U.S. House of Representatives November 14, 2002

Unintended Consequences

Mr. Speaker, government efforts at benevolence always backfire. Inevitably, unintended consequences overwhelm the short-term and narrow benefits of authoritarian programs designed to make the economic system fair, the people morally better, and the world safe for democracy. One hundred years of intense government "benevolence" in the United States has brought us to the brink of economic collapse, a domestic police state, and perpetual war overseas. And now our obsession with conquering and occupying Iraq is about to unleash consequences that no one can accurately foresee. The negative possibilities are unlimited and the benefits negligible.

Some have warned that the planned pre-emptive invasion of Iraq could prove so destabilizing to the region and the world that it literally could ignite a worldwide conflict big enough to be called World War III. Nuclear exchanges are perhaps even more likely to occur under the conditions of an expanded Middle east war than they were at the height of the Cold War, when the Soviets and U.S. had literally thousands of nuclear weapons pointed at each other. If we carry out our threats to invade and occupy Iraq, especially if we do so unilaterally, the odds are at least 50-50 that this worst case scenario will result.

The best-case scenario would be a short war, limited to weeks and involving few American and Iraqi civilian casualties. This, in combination with a unified Iraqi welcome, the placing into power of a stable popular government that is long lasting, contributing to regional stability and prosperity, and free elections, just is what our planners are hoping for. The odds of achieving this miraculous result are probably one in 10,000.

More likely, the consequences will be severe and surprising and not what anyone planned for or intended. It will likely fall somewhere between the two extremes, but closer to the worst scenario than the best.

There are numerous other possible consequences. Here are a few worth contemplating:

No local Iraqi or regional Arab support materializes. Instead of a spontaneous uprising as is hoped, the opposite occurs. The Iraqi citizens anxious to get rid of Hussein join in his defense, believing foreign occupation and control of their oil is far worse than living under the current dictator. Already we see that sanctions have done precisely that. Instead of blaming Saddam Hussein and his dictatorial regime for the suffering of the past decade, the Iraqi people blame the U.S.-led sanctions and the constant bombing by the U.S. and British. Hussein has increased his power and the people have suffered from the war against Iraq since 1991. There are a lot of reasons to believe this same reaction will occur with an escalation of our military attacks. Training dissidents like the Iraqi National Congress will prove no more reliable than the training and the military assistance we provided in the 70's and the 80's for Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein when they qualified as U.S. "allies."

Pre-emptive war against Iraq may well prompt traditional enemies in the regions to create new alliances, as the hatred for America comes to exceed age-old hatreds that caused regional conflicts. Iraq already has made overtures and concessions to Iran and Kuwait, with some signs of conciliation being shown by both sides. Total domination of the entire Persian Gulf and the Caspian Sea regions by the U.S. will surely stir survival instincts in these countries as well as in Russia. As the balance of power continues to shift in the U.S.'s favor, there will be even more reasons for countries like China and Pakistan to secretly support the nations that are being subjected to U.S. domination in the region. The U.S. will never have a free ride in its effort to control the entire world's oil supply. Antagonisms are bound to build, and our ability to finance the multiple military conflicts that are bound to come is self-limited.

The Kurds may jump at the chance, if chaos ensues, to fulfill their dream of an independent Kurdish homeland. This, of course, will stir the ire of the Turks and the Iranians. Instead of stability for northern Iraq, the war likely will precipitate more fighting than the war planners ever imagined. Delivering Kurdish Iraq to Turkey as a prize for its cooperation with our war plans will not occur without a heated and deadly struggle. Turkey is already deeply concerned about the prospect for Kurdish independence, and only remains loyal to America because U.S. taxpayers are forced to subsidize an already depressed Turkish economy caused by our Iraqi policies. More money will pacify for a while, but either frustration with the perpetual nature of the problem or our inability to continue the financial bailout will lead Turkey to have second thoughts about its obedience to our demands to wage war from their country. All of this raises the odds that Islamic radicals will once more take control of the Turkish government. These developing conditions increase the odds of civil strife erupting in Turkey.

Islamic fundamentalism in the entire region will get a shot in the arm once the invasion of Iraq begins, especially in Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and Turkey. Our placing the Shah in power in Iran in the 1950's was a major reason that the Ayatollah eventually made it to power in the late 1970's- a delayed but nevertheless direct consequence of our policy. Balance of power in this area of

the world has always been delicate, and outside interference serves only to destabilize. There's no evidence that our current efforts will lead to more stability. Promoting democracy, as it's said we're doing, is a farce. If elections were to occur in most of the Arab countries today, Osama bin Laden and his key allies would win. Besides, it seems we adapt quite well to working with military dictators that have ousted elected leaders, as we do in Pakistan by rewarding their cooperation with huge subsidies and future promises.

In the chaos that may erupt, several countries might see an opportunity to move on their neighbors. Already we have been warned that cooperation from Russia means no American criticism or resistance to its moves in Georgia or Chechnya. China could attack Taiwan. North Korea could renew its struggle against South Korea. India may see this as an opportunity to settle the Kashmir dispute with Pakistan- with the real risk of nuclear war breaking out. It seems the obsession about Iraq's improbable possession of nuclear weapons far exceeds the more realistic possibility that our pre-emptive strike against Iraq may precipitate a nuclear exchange between these two countries, or even a first strike with nuclear weapons by Israel against Iraq.

Expect Israel to use the chaos to further promote their occupation and settlements in the Palestinian homeland and possibly even in Lebanon. Israel's possession of nuclear weapons in a period of outright war will surely serve to intimidate her neighbors and intensify her efforts to further expand the Israeli homeland.

If massive Iraqi civilian casualties result, as indeed is possible though not deliberate, expect more worldwide condemnation and even a UN resolution condemning what others will call American War Crimes. Our refusal to be subject to the International Criminal Court, while demanding others be tried in the court, will never sit well with the world community. Our position is a far cry from what it ought to be- demanding national sovereignty while promoting neutrality and friendship with all nations.

Our own CIA has warned that war with Iraq will more likely cause Saddam Hussein to use any massively lethal weapons that he might have than if we don't attack him. Also, they warned that the likelihood of al Qaeda attacks on our own soil will increase once an invasion begins. This, of course, could cause a wave of well-placed snipers around the United States.

It is now admitted that over 150,000 U.S. servicemen are suffering from Persian Gulf War Syndrome as a result of the first Persian Gulf War. Our government would like to ignore this fact, but a new war literally could create an epidemic of casualties of the same sort, since the

exact etiology is not completely understood. The number of deaths and injuries that might occur from an occupation of Iraq is unknown, but conceivably could be much higher than anyone wants to imagine.

Anti Americanism now sweeping the world will significantly increase once we launch our attack. Already we have seen elections swayed in Europe, Turkey, and Pakistan by those unfriendly to the United States. The attitude that the world's "King of the Hill" must be brought down will escalate, especially if the war goes poorly and does not end quickly with minimal civilian deaths.

Al Qaeda likely will get a real boost in membership once the war breaks out. Membership is already pervasive throughout the world without any centralized control. We should expect this to continue, with an explosion in membership and a negative impact around the world. Our attack will confirm to the doubters that bin Laden was right in assessing our desire to control the Middle Eastern resources and dictate policy to the entire region while giving support to Israel over the Palestinians.

Our very weak economy could easily collapse with the additional burden of a costly war. War is never a way to make the people of a country better off. It does not end recessions, and is much more likely to cause one or make one much worse. A significant war will cause revenues to decrease, taxes to increase, inflation to jump, encourage trade wars, and balloon the deficit. Oil prices will soar and the dollar will retreat ever further.

Already we're hearing demands for a military draft to be instituted for both men and women. I see that coming, and it will serve as another source of domestic friction as our economy deteriorates and unemployment rises. Under these conditions the standard of living for all Americans is destined to go down.

This war, if of any significant duration, in time will be seen as a Republican war plain and simple. Along with a weak economy, it could easily usher in a "regime change" here in the United States. The conditions may justify a change in leadership, but the return of control to the opposition party will allow them to use the opportunity to promote their domestic liberal agenda and socialize the entire economy.

The net result, regardless of the size and duration of the coming war, will be that the people of

the United States will be less free and much poorer. The bigger the war, the greater will be the suffering.